

## PAL 20 Bastreet Downs, North Hill, Historic Environment Action Plan



*Windswept oak tree reaching over a probably Bronze Age roundhouse on the western side of the PAL (Pete Herring February 2025).*

### Location, geology and topography

Centred: SX 247768

Extent: 32 ha (79 acres)

#### *Geology*

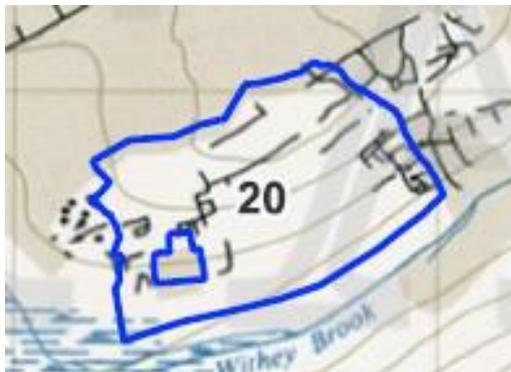
Granite (based on BGS Online Viewer). Two or three very large boulder, possibly outcrops on mid-slopes, in area of dense furze. Some clutter near the large stones, otherwise a scatter of moorstones.

#### *Topography*

South-facing slope, steep in places, above the Withey Brook. Highest point on N boundary of PAL, east of entrance track, 282 metres (925 feet), falls to 224 metres (734 feet) beside Withey Brook in SE corner.

#### *Current management and structures of ownership, commoners, etc:*

Not common land. In private ownership.



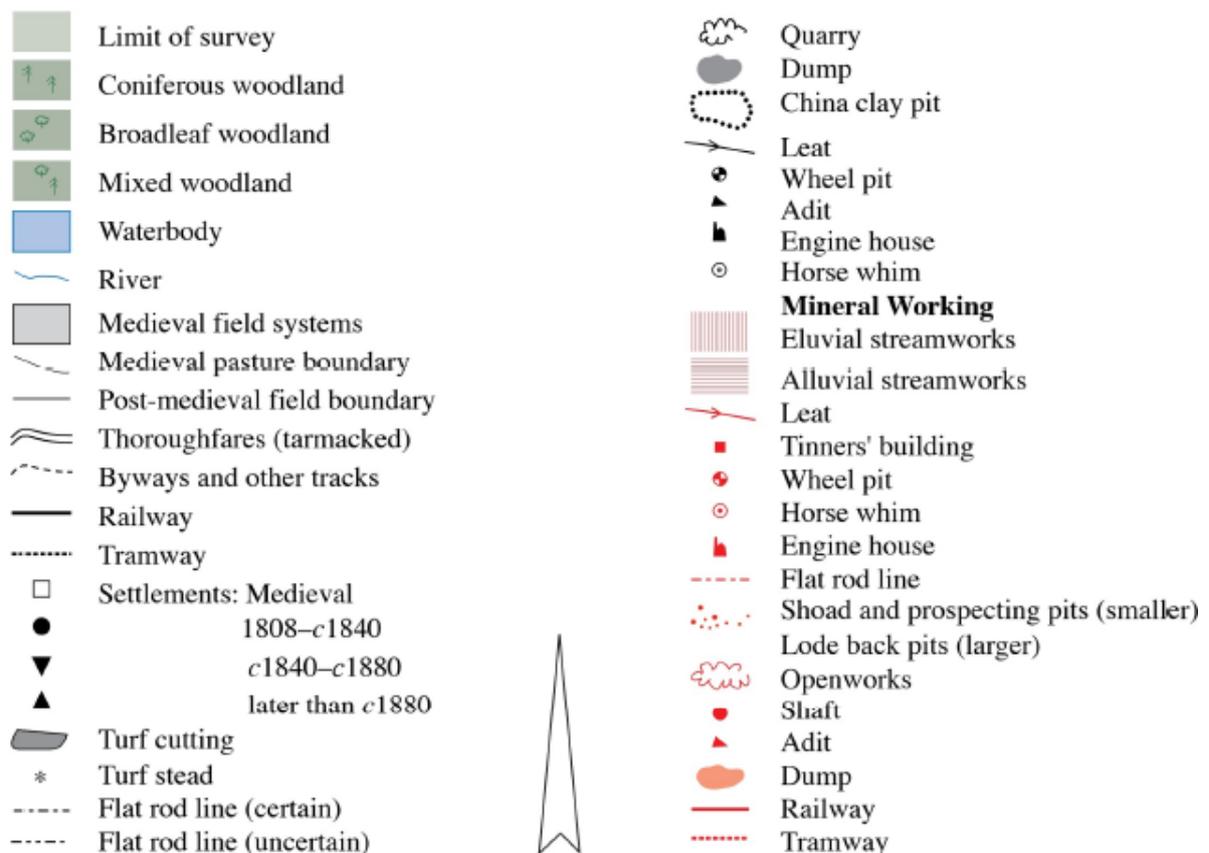
- Prehistoric field and enclosure boundaries
- Stone banks and ramparts
- Hut Circle
- ◄ Long cairn (oriented)
- Cairn/barrow
- Stone Circle
- ⊙ Henge (with stone circle)
- Stone row
- <sup>sg</sup> Stone Setting
- <sup>st</sup> Standing stone

Extract from Prehistoric overview map (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).



- Cultivation ridges
- Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries, based on the O.S. 1808 two-inch MS map, and tithe maps.
- Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries found by air and ground survey.
- Embanked enclosure
- Surviving settlement, recorded before 1540.
- Surviving settlement, recorded between 1540 and 1808.
- Deserted settlement, recorded before 1540.
- ▲ Medieval longhouse
- △ Post-medieval dwelling (abandoned)
- Other medieval structure
- Other post-medieval structure
- LANK 1278 Cornish place name, and earliest recorded date.
- Hulker 1407 English place name, and earliest recorded date.
- ⋯ Parish Boundary c. 1840





Extract from *Post-medieval and industrial overview map* (Herring et al 2008, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).

## Land use history

### Land use history

#### Pre-1748

This is quite marginal land, despite being south facing. It is steep and has many natural boulders and some areas of clutter. Over 3000 years ago two roundhouse settlements were established within the framework of a coaxial field system. Smaller square fields appear to have been used for cultivation as well as to keep livestock in (or out). There is, however, little sign of significant later use of the area.

A settlement called Bastreet was recorded as early as 1290 (MCO13334). Its name appears to be English and might be a contraction of 'By the East Street'. It has been suggested that this was in reference to a possible causeway that led to the Withey Brook (MCO22122), but this is unlikely.

There was some quite limited reuse of small areas within the prehistoric fields in the medieval period (when lazybeds were created).

#### Thomas Martyn's 1748 map

In 1748 Bastreet was shown a short way south of 'Bowland' [now Bowhayland] around 550 metres NW of the small farm in the PAL that was shown first on the Tithe Map (1840). The area of the PAL was shown featureless.

#### 1808 OS drawing

Shows no settlement and only fragmentary signs of fields.

### *c1840 Tithe Map*

The settlement shown as 'Basstreet' on the North Hill Tithe Map (1841) was a new establishment created after 1808. It had eight small rectilinear fields (most between 1 and 2 acres, and all but two recorded as containing coarse pasture, the others 'occasionally arable'). These fields appear to have in part reused prehistoric lines for their boundaries, rebuilt as drystone walls or Cornish hedges.

### *c1880 OS map*

The larger central field was shown with rough grassland and some patches of furze. Furze was denser in the smaller fields further west. The roundhouses at the western edge of the PAL were already visible and plotted as 'Hut Circles'.

### *c1906 OS map*

No substantial change.

### *Modern*

Twentieth century OS maps show the fields, and the rest of the PAL, as rough pasture (using the conventions for furze and for rough grassland). The 1946 RAF aerial photo shows the land as quite open, apparently under pale grass, perhaps *Molinia*. It shows a scatter of then quite small trees to the north-east of the waterworks and smaller numbers on the slopes to the west, and more again towards the eastern edge of the PAL, including some quite large specimens (oaks).



*Bastreet from Trewortha Tor in 1995 with much more open grassland to the east of the waterworks than currently (Pete Herring).*

All traces of the farming settlement at Bastreet were removed when the waterworks was established either during or shortly after the Second World War (shown on the RAF aerial photo 46F/12, 5150, taken on 11 April 1946; CSHER).

The PAL has continued to be used as rough grazing since the War, apparently at stocking levels that did relatively little damage to the ground surface, as confirmed by the 2021 aerial photographs, and which encouraged the spread of European Gorse (furze). Small areas of darker vegetation shown to the east of the centre of the PAL on the 1946 aerial photograph were probably furze. By 2000 its extent had increased considerably, especially in the eastern half of the PAL and it has continued to spread in the first quarter of this century so that it now covers around half of the PAL and

makes access to grazing for cattle and sheep increasingly difficult in large parts, and it is slowly obscuring the archaeological remains, and is presumably causing disturbance to below-ground archaeological remains through its root systems.

## Historic Environment

### Summary of main heritage assets

#### *Prehistoric ceremonial and ritual*

There are no remains at surface

#### *Prehistoric domestic and agricultural*

An extensive **coaxial field system** (MCO20547) of probably Middle Bronze Age date, with some areas of subdivision into **smaller squarish fields**, some associated with **roundhouses** (also known as 'hut circles'), including a group of 11 roundhouses towards the western end of the system (MCO20548), mostly outside the current PAL boundary, and a group of 6 at the eastern end (MCO20549), mostly within the PAL. The boundaries of the fields are **stony banks** up to 1.5m wide and in places as high as 0.8m, with occasional upright slabs. It is likely that they were originally stock-proof and that the agriculture practiced within them was mixed arable and grazing.

An area of c8 hectares between the two settlements lacks prehistoric boundaries, and is in an area with more rock outcrops and clutter and so may have been an area of rough grazing in prehistory.

#### *Medieval*

Some of the inherited prehistoric fields appear to have been repurposed in the medieval period as there are traces of the ridging left by lazybeds, cultivation ridges dug by hand with spade and shovel (MCO22116).

#### *Industrial*

There are fragmentary traces of an alluvial streamworks (MCO48131) on the north bank of the Withey Brook, upstream to the west of the waterworks.

#### *Post-medieval and modern*

MCO 23772, a waterworks abstracting fresh water from the Withey Brook was established sometime before 1946.

Some examples of splitting of granite moorstones were noticed during the February 2025 field visit.

### Significance of landscape visibility

The furze that dominates the eastern half of the PAL has covered much of the prehistoric and medieval field system. Views from the PAL are largely to the south to Hawk's Tor which rears up steeply and darkly on the far side of the Withey Brook, a fast flowing stream on the southern edge.

## Designations

### Historic Environment

#### *Scheduled Monuments*

NHLE 1011558 'Prehistoric co-axial and regular aggregate field systems with incorporated and adjacent hut circle settlements on Bastreet Downs, south of Bowda Farm', first Listed 16 December 1974; amended 14 October 1993.

This SM includes most of the prehistoric boundaries and all the roundhouses. It extends beyond the PAL at both its western and eastern ends, because the PAL's boundary was determined in part by the extent of the 2000 CROW Act Open Access land.

#### *Entries on HE's Heritage at Risk Register*

The Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1011558) is included on the Historic England register of Heritage at Risk.

Its Condition is 'Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems', the Principal Vulnerability is 'Scrub/tree growth', and the Trend is recorded as 'Declining'.

### Natural environment designations:

#### *Sites of Special Scientific Interest*

NA

#### *Special Areas of Conservation*

NA

#### *Cornwall Conservation Areas*

NA

### Other designations

#### *Common Land*

NA

#### *CROW Access Land*

Yes, whole PAL.

#### *Registered rights of way.*

None

#### *Neighbourhood Development Plans*

Yes, North Hill, made in 2017.

### Change between 2005 and 2025

(Overview derived from comparison of CCC 2005 aerial photography, available as a basemap on the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, and the Airbus 2025 satellite imagery as viewed from Google Earth aerial photos.)

- The post-war incursion of furze (largely open grassland shown on 1946 RAF photo) has further consolidated in the last 20 years. Large parts of the eastern half of the PAL are now closed canopy furze.
- Livestock numbers and winter grazing have increased the pressure on remaining areas of ancient semi-natural grassland, causing localised poaching,

and increasing the erosion caused by heavy livestock forcing their way through narrow passages in the furze and scrub.

- Trees continue to invade in W, S and E parts.
- There is also some bracken in the SE part of the PAL, but quite well-grazed grass along the northern edge and in the western half. The trees have continued to grow and many are now mature, including oaks, hawthorns, willows, hollies and birch.
- In the last 2 or 3 years there has been more intensive grazing, including in the winter (cattle and sheep were grazing in February 2025). Feeders were set up close to the waterworks sometime between 2005 and 2016 (aerial photos on CSHER) and wrapped hay or silage is stored at the top northern edge of the PAL. There is now considerable poaching in places, and this is exacerbated by the strengthening of the hold by European Gorse, which cattle force passages through, leading to rutting and erosion.

## Issues

Spread of furze.

- Reducing the diversity of the ancient rough grasslands and their flora and fauna, including their invertebrates.
- Obscuring the archaeological remains.
- Causing erosion as vehicles and livestock are confined to ever narrower tracks.
- Encourage tick-borne diseases in livestock and wild fauna.

Poaching due to winter grazing and supplementary feeding.

- Eroding prehistoric and medieval banks of fields, and medieval lazybeds.

## Opportunities

To better guide grazing levels in the PAL by closer understanding of the flora and fauna of the ancient semi-natural grasslands.

## Recommendations

### General approach

Retain open ancient semi-natural grassland with easy movement in all directions. Keep the important remains of a prehistoric roundhouse settlement and its fields clear of furze.

### Specific recommendations

- Address the growth of furze on the western roundhouse settlement.
- Adjust grazing to push back the conversion to furze.
- Reduce poaching.
- Further archaeological recording; survey and analyse the field pattern to disentangle the prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval.

### Adjusting the extent of the PAL:

LIDAR has been examined and the site was examined on 8.2.25. If the criteria for delineation of PALs were ever to allow their extension into land that was not CROW Act access land then both its western and eastern edges should be extended to

include the whole of the Scheduled Monument in the PAL. That to the west appears to be in the same land management unit as the PAL, but that to the east is a different unit, with a stock-proof hedge between the two.

## References

### Appendix 1 2007 PAL text

#### **20Bastreet Downs**

##### *Historic Environment*

This small PAL contains the extensive remains of a prehistoric reave field system, covering an area of approximately 1150m by 400m. The layout is mainly rectilinear: the predominant feature being a series of long, parallel boundaries running along the contour forming in one instance a field 90m wide by 480m long. At the south east end of the field system, the fields have more of a tendency to run strip-like across the contour: perhaps because they are of later origin. The boundaries are varied, and include walls, banks, cultivation lynchets and scarps.

A settlement of five or six houses is associated with the small rectilinear fields. The houses are all grouped within an area of just over 1ha. Five of the houses run in a rough line up and down the slope while the sixth lies just to the north east, along the slope. In size, the houses range from 3.5m in internal diameter to 9m and they are not all circular. All of the houses are sitting on or by lynchets of the associated field system. Particularly in the vicinity of the settlement the pattern of large fields is subdivided into much smaller rectilinear units, ranging in size from only 20 by 40m to 80 by 100m.

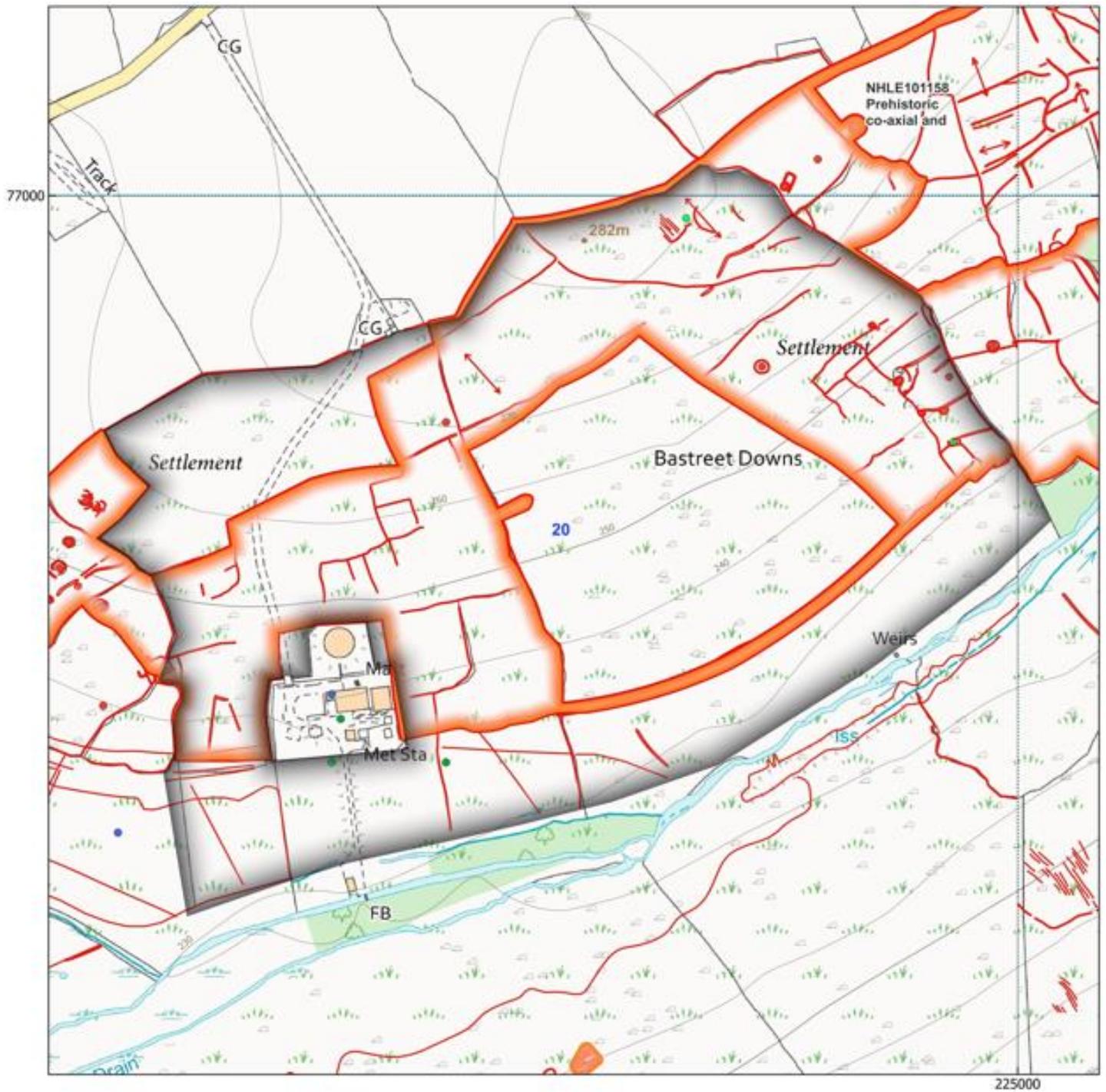
##### *Natural Environment*

Western Heath, Scrub and Bracken

##### *Designations*

Some elements of the field system are Scheduled (No. 15205).

##### *Vision*



- PAL Areas
- Scheduled Monuments
- Scheduled Monuments @ Risk
- Feature Groups
- Prehistoric
- Medieval
- Post Medieval
- Aerial Mapping Transcriptions
- CSHER point data
- Prehistoric
- Early Medieval
- Romano British
- Medieval
- Post Medieval
- Modern

Dominant Habitat: Western Heath Mosaic

Habitat Change: Medium

Notes: Post-war incursion of furze has consolidated in the last 20 years, forming closed canopy in the eastern half of the PAL. Increased livestock numbers and winter grazing have caused erosion and localised poaching. Trees continue to invade in W,S and E part

## PAL 20 Bastreet

[www.statement-heritage.com](http://www.statement-heritage.com)

Cornwall Council

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